



**CALIFORNIA TEACHERS  
COLLABORATIVE FOR  
HOLOCAUST AND  
GENOCIDE EDUCATION**

**Rooms 1 and 9: Immigration and Identity: Exploring Aron Rabinovich's Journey from the Soviet Union to America**

**Audience:** Grades 6 - 8 (with extension activities for grades 9-12)

**Time:** Two 50-minute periods

**Student Outcomes:**

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to...

1. Analyze primary source testimony to understand the experiences of Jewish immigrants from the Soviet Union during the 1970s.
2. Evaluate the historical significance of oral history and the role of organizations like the Shoah Foundation in preserving historical memory.
3. Compare and contrast life in the Soviet Union with life in the United States during the Cold War period.
4. Examine the challenges and opportunities faced by immigrants during their integration into American society.

**Aligned Standards (California Common Core)**

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2:** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7:** Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2:** (Extension): Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text

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### **Context:**

This lesson explores the life story of Aron Rabinovich through a virtual museum experience, focusing on his family history and immigration from the Soviet Union to the United States in the 1970s. Rooms 1 and 9 in the museum can be visited together. These rooms weave together the story of Aron and his family as the fight for their survival. Students will engage with primary source materials, including video testimonies, to understand the broader historical context of Jewish life in the Soviet Union, the challenges of immigration, and the importance of preserving historical memory through organizations like the Shoah Foundation.

### **Glossary:**

#### **Key Terms**

- **Shoah Foundation:** An organization dedicated to preserving testimonies of survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust and other genocides.
- **Soviet Union:** A former communist state that existed from 1922 to 1991.
- **Immigration:** The process of moving to a new country to live permanently.
- **Oral History:** The collection and study of historical information using recorded interviews with people having personal knowledge of past events
- **Cold War:** A period of geopolitical tension between the United States and the Soviet Union.
- **Testimony:** A formal statement or evidence, especially under oath.
- **Diaspora:** People settled far from their ancestral homeland.

### **Materials:**

- [Read about the museum](#)
- [Access to virtual museum Rooms 1 and 9](#)
- Student devices (computers/tablets)
- [Digital note-taking template](#)
- [Exit ticket template](#)

### **Differentiation:**

- Create a bilingual glossary with historical terms and visual aids
- Provide sentence frames for discussion and writing responses
- Offer audio versions of written content
- Use graphic organizers to chunk information into manageable sections

### **Virtual Museum Navigation Support**

- Enable high contrast display and larger text options
- Ensure closed captions are available for all video content
- Provide structured exploration checklist
- Break exploration into 10-minute segments with reflection pauses

### **Virtual Museum Support:**

- Provide guided viewing questions for video testimonies
- Offer closed captions for video content
- Create mixed-ability grouping for discussions
- Provide sentence frames for written responses
- Translate key terms into students' home languages
- Offer graphic organizers for note-taking
- Allow for multiple forms of assessment response (written, oral, artistic)

### **Assessment(s) (Teacher Choice):**

- Group discussions using evidence from the virtual museum
- Digital note-taking during museum exploration
- Think-Pair-Share activities about immigration experiences

- Written reflection comparing Aron's immigration experience to contemporary immigration stories
- Creation of a digital timeline of key events in Aron's life
- Oral presentation analyzing the importance of preserving historical testimony

### **Lesson/Activity:**

## **Day 1 (50 minutes)**

### **Opening (15-20 minutes)**

- Guided reading of "Survivor: Aron's Story" introduction (pages 5-7)
- Class discussion of key themes from the reading
  - Identity and Cultural Heritage
    - Aron's Jewish identity in the Soviet Union
    - The preservation of cultural traditions despite restrictions
    - The relationship between identity and immigration
- Introduction to oral history and its importance
- Brief overview of Jewish life in the Soviet Union during the Cold War
- Set expectations for virtual museum exploration

### **Main Activity (25-30 minutes)**

Students explore Room 1 of the virtual museum focusing on:

- Aron's family background
- Life in the Soviet Union
- Decision to immigrate
- Students take guided notes using provided template
- Pause at key points for whole-class discussion

### **Closure (5 minutes)**

- Exit ticket: What questions do you have about Aron's experience?

## **Day 2 (50 minutes)**

### **Opening (5 minutes)**

- Review key points from the previous day

- Address student questions

### **Main Activity (35 minutes)**

- Watch and analyze selected video testimonies
- Small group discussions about immigration challenges
- Compare Aron's experience with other immigration stories
- Connect to contemporary immigration experiences

### **Closure (10 minutes)**

- Begin summative assessment
- Write reflection on the role of the Shoah Foundation

### **Extension Activities (Grades 9-12)**

#### **Virtual Museum Room 9 Exploration**

- Detailed analysis of Aron's family photographs and their stories
- Creation of a family tree with historical context for each family member
- Written reflection comparing pre-war and post-war family experiences
- Analysis of how photographs serve as historical documents

#### **Testimony and Oral History Projects**

- Access and analyze additional testimonies through the USC Shoah Foundation website
- Engage with Dimensions in Testimony's 3D interactive survivor testimonies
- Compare different testimony formats (video, 3D interactive, written) and their impact
- Create questions for interactive testimony sessions
- Analyze patterns and themes across multiple survivor testimonies

#### **Research and Analysis Projects**

- Research paper on Soviet Jewish immigration to the United States
- Comparative analysis of immigration policies: 1970s vs. today
- Creation of a digital oral history project interviewing local immigrants
- Analysis of Cold War politics and its impact on immigration

## Interactive Media Projects

- Create a digital story map of Aron's family history
- Develop a multimedia presentation comparing different testimony formats
- Design a virtual exhibition incorporating multiple survivor stories
- Create a documentary incorporating various testimony formats

## Supplemental Resources

- \* [USC Shoah Foundation website](#)
- \* [Dimensions in Testimony interactive testimony platform](#)
- \* [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum website](#)

## References

USC Shoah Foundation. (2022). IWitness: Video testimonies from the USC Shoah Foundation. <https://iWitness.usc.edu/>

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. (2020). Oral history: A guide to conducting interviews. <https://www.ushmm.org/collections/the-museums-collections/about/oral-history>

Centropa. (2023). Jewish historical testimonies from Central and Eastern Europe. <https://www.centropa.org/>

American Immigration Council. (2015). Teaching immigration history. <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/learning-our-past-refugee-experience-united-states>

Facing History and Ourselves. (2022). Teaching Holocaust and human behavior. <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-holocaust-and-human-behavior>